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THE

# ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE

IN

# MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH

## DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES  
OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY FOR THE  
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

CHARLES HUNTER ROSS

LATE FELLOW IN THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

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[Reprinted from the *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, New Series, Vol. I, No. 3.]

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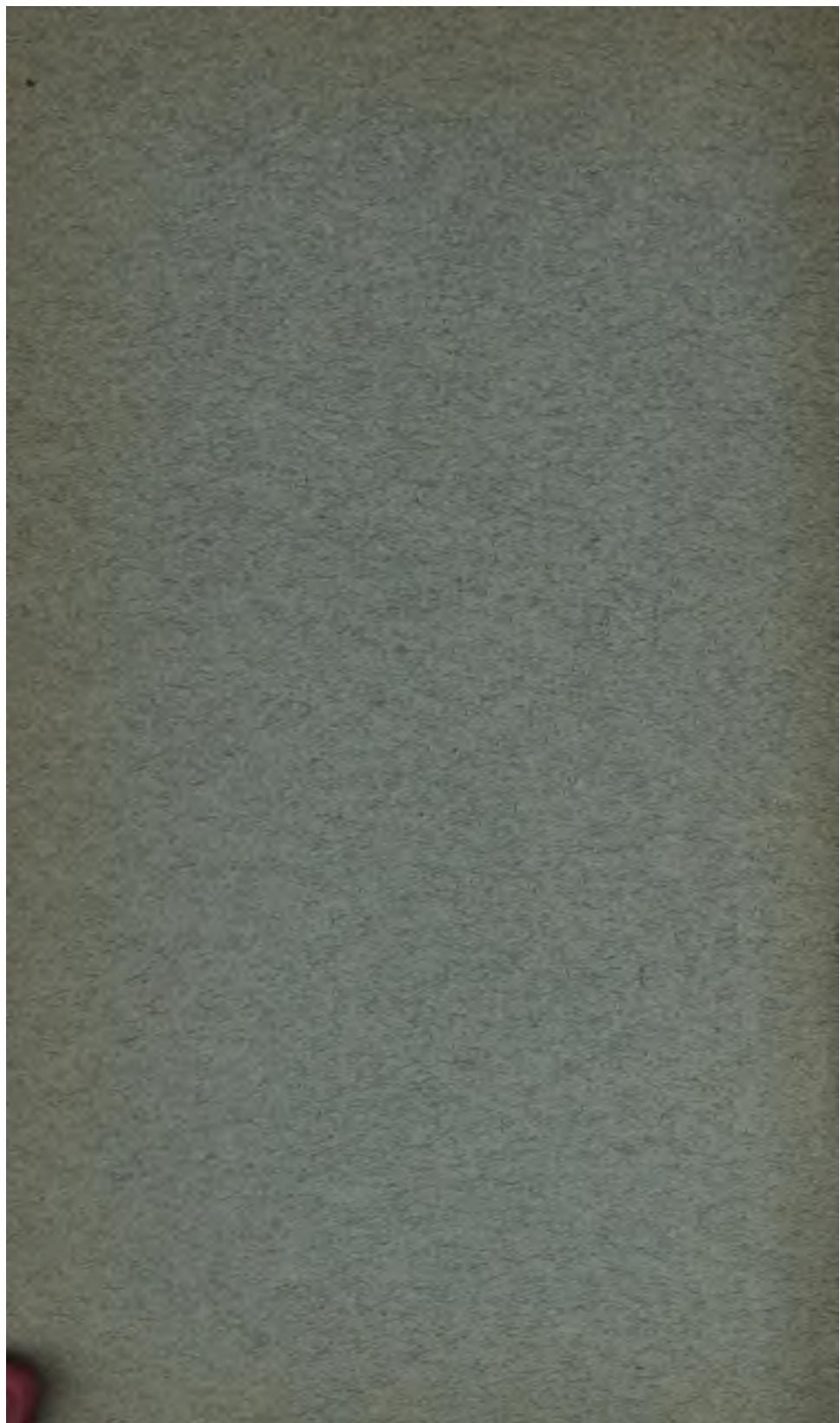
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BALTIMORE  
THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA  
1893

**JOHN MURPHY & CO., PRINTERS,  
BALTIMORE.**

TO

MY DEAR FRIEND,

DR. MORGAN CALLAWAY, JR.,

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

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	PAGE.
I. INTRODUCTION.....	7
I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE ENGLISH.....	13
II. INFLUENCE OF OLD FRENCH AND ITALIAN ON THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE.....	25
III. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MODERN ENGLISH.....	34
IV. THE CASE OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH.....	44
V. THE STYLISTIC EFFECT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH.....	57
VI. RESULTS.....	63



## THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH.

### INTRODUCTION.

There is much divergence of opinion among scholars as to the naming of the main periods of the English language, and hardly any two agree in regard to the limits of each period. But in treating of the absolute participle, an arbitrary division must be made according to the occurrence and development of this form in the language. The following division into three periods will therefore serve our purpose :

Anglo-Saxon—to 1150 ;  
Middle English—1150 to 1500 ;  
Modern English—1500 to the present.

For the Anglo-Saxon period the subject of the absolute participle has received full and scientific treatment at the hands of Morgan Callaway, Jr., in his dissertation (Johns Hopkins University), *The Absolute Participle in Anglo-Saxon*, Baltimore, 1889. This admirable monograph has already received its meed of praise from scholars both in this country and abroad, and it takes rank as one of the most

- 8. *Ch. Poems* = Morris, *Chaucer's Poetical Works*. 6 vols. London, 1888.
- 9. *Constance*<sup>1</sup> = *The Story of Constance*. Chaucer Society : *Originals and Analogues*, London, 1872.
- 10. *Fortescue* = *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy*. London, 1714.
- 11. *Gamelyn* = Skeat, *The Tale of Gamelyn*. Oxford, 1884.
- 12. *Gower* = Pauli, *The Confessio Amantis*. 3 vols. London, 1857.
- 13. *Hampole* = Perry, *English Prose Treatises of Richard Rolle de Hampole*. EETS., London, 1866.
- 14. *Havelok*<sup>1</sup> = Skeat, *The Lay of Havelok the Dane*. EETS., London, 1868.
- 15. *Hoccleve* = Furnivall, *The Minor Poems*. EETS., London, 1892.
- 16. *Horn* = Morris, *King Horn*, in *Specimens of Early English*, I. 237-286.
- 17. *James I* = Skeat, *The Kingis Quair*. Scottish Text Socy., Edinburgh, 1884.
- 18. *Juliana* = Cockayne, *The Liflade of St. Juliana*. EETS., London, 1872.
- 19. *Landry*<sup>1</sup> = Wright, *The Book of the Knight of La Tour-Landry*. EETS., London, 1868.
- 20. *Langland* = Skeat, *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1886.
- 21. *Malory* = Wright, *The History of King Arthur*. 3 vols. London, 1866.
- 22. *Mand. Hall.* = Halliwell, *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile*. London, 1869.
- 23. *Mand.<sup>1</sup>* = Warner, *The Buke of John Maundeuill*, with French original. Roxburghe Club, Westminster, 1889.
- 24. *Paston* = Gairdner, *The Paston Letters*. 3 vols. London, 1872.
- 25. *Pecock* = Babington, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*. Vol. I. London, 1860.

important contributions to the much neglected subject of English syntax. Callaway treats thoroughly of the occurrence, the uses, the origin, and the stylistic effect of the absolute participle in the whole range of Anglo-Saxon literature. He also discusses the origin of the construction in the other Teutonic languages, thus showing appropriate breadth of treatment. It is hardly necessary to add that this dissertation has served as a model for the present monograph in its general features.

Definitions of the absolute participial clause are not wanting, but the most comprehensive one yet given is that of Callaway : "When to a substantive not the subject of a verb and dependent upon no other word in the sentence (noun, adjective, verb, or preposition) a participle is joined as its predicate, a clause is formed that modifies the verbal predicate of the sentence and denotes an accompanying circumstance," as in : "*The train having gone, I returned home.*"

The following texts have been read :

(a) MIDDLE ENGLISH :

1. *Anc. Riwle* = Morton, *The Ancren Riwle*. Camden Society, London, 1853.
2. *Ballads* = Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*. 2 vols. Boston, 1885.
3. *Caxton* = Hazlitt, *Paris and Vienna*. Roxburghe Library, London, 1868.
4. *Ch. Astrol.* = Brae, *The Treatise on the Astrolabe*. London, 1870.
5. *Ch. Boeth.* = Furnivall, *Chaucer's Boece*. Chaucer Society, London, 1886.
6. *Ch. Melib.* = *The Tale of Melibeus*, in Morris's *Chaucer*, III. 139-197.
7. *Ch. Person* = *The Persones Tale*, Morris, III. 263-368.

8. *Ch. Poems* = Morris, *Chaucer's Poetical Works*. 6 vols. London, 1888.
9. *Constance*<sup>1</sup> = *The Story of Constance*. Chaucer Society : *Originals and Analogues*, London, 1872.
10. *Fortescue* = *The Difference between an Absolute and Limited Monarchy*. London, 1714.
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20. *Langland* = Skeat, *The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1886.
21. *Malory* = Wright, *The History of King Arthur*. 3 vols. London, 1866.
22. *Mand. Hall.* = Halliwell, *The Voiage and Travaile of Sir John Maundevile*. London, 1869.
23. *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> = Warner, *The Buke of John Maundeuill*, with French original. Roxburghe Club, Westminster, 1889.
24. *Paston* = Gairdner, *The Paston Letters*. 3 vols. London, 1872.
25. *Pecock* = Babington, *The Repressor of Over Much Blaming of the Clergy*. Vol. I. London, 1860.



26. *Romaunt* = Morris, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, in his *Chaucer*, vi. 1-234.
27. *Wyclif Pr.* = Arnold, *Select English Works*. Vol. I. Oxford, 1869.
28. *Wyclif* = Forshall and Madden, *The Holy Bible*. Vol. IV. Oxford, 1850.
29. *York Plays* = Smith, *York Mystery Plays*. Oxford, 1885.

(b) OLD FRENCH:

1. *Constance*<sup>2</sup> = Brock, *The Life of Constance*, from Trivet's *Anglo-Norman Chronicle*. Chaucer Society, London, 1872.
2. *Havelok*<sup>2</sup> = Wright, *Le Lai d'Havelok le Danois*, in Gaimar's *Anglo-Norman Metrical Chronicle*. Caxton Society, London, 1850.
3. *Landry*<sup>2</sup> = de Montaignon, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*. Paris, 1854.
4. *Mand.*<sup>2</sup> = See *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> in (a) MIDDLE ENGLISH.
5. *Map* = Furnivall, *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Roxburghe Club, London, 1864. (English in *Malory*, III. 51-187.)
6. *Melib.*<sup>2</sup> = *Histoire de Mellibée*, in *Le Menagier de Paris*, I. 186-235. Soc. des Biblioph. Franç., Paris, 1846.
7. *Roman* = Michel, *Le Roman de la Rose*. 2 vols. Paris, 1864.

(c) ITALIAN:

- Fil.* = *Il Filostrato*, in *Opere Volgari di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. XIII. Firenze, 1831. (English in Chaucer's *Troylus and Cryseyde*.)

(d) MODERN ENGLISH:

1. *Addison* = Green, *Essays*. London, 1890.
2. *Arnold* = *Essays in Criticism*. 1st and 2nd Series. New York, 1888.  
= *Poetical Works*. London, 1890.
3. *Bacon* = Morley, *Essays*. London, 1883.

170 (1)

4. *Berners* = Lee, *Huon of Bordeaux*. Vol. I. EETS., London, 1882.
5. *Birrell* = *Obiter Dicta*. 1st and 2nd Series. New York, 1890.
6. *Blackmore* = *Lorna Doone*. 3 vols. New York, 1891.
7. *Browne* = Greenhill, *Religio Medici*. London, 1889.
8. *Browning, Mrs.* = *Aurora Leigh*. New York, n. d.
9. *Bunyan* = *The Pilgrim's Progress*. New York, n. d.
10. *Burke* = Payne, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Oxford, 1888.
11. *Cooper* = *The Spy*. Troy, 1886.
12. *Daniel* = Haslewood, *A Defence of Ryme*. London, 1815.
13. *De Quincey* = Morley, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*. London, 1886.
14. *Dickens* = *David Copperfield* and *Pickwick Papers*. Boston, 1887.
15. *Dryden* = Arnold, *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy*. Oxford, 1889.  
= Christie, *Select Poems*. Oxford, 1883.
16. *George Eliot* = *Romola*. New York, n. d.
17. *Fielding* = *The History of Tom Jones*. 2 vols. New York, 1879.
18. *Forster* = *The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*. Vol. I. London, 1854.
19. *Franklin* = Montgomery, *Autobiography*. Boston, 1891.
20. *Froude* = *Cæsar*. New York, 1887.
21. *Goldsmith* = *The Vicar of Wakefield*. New York, 1882.  
= Dobson, *Selected Poems*. Oxford, 1887.
22. *Gosson* = Arber, *The Schoole of Abuse*. London, 1868.
23. *Gray* = Gosse, *Letters*. Vol. I. London, 1884.
24. *Greene* = Ward, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. Oxford, 1887.
25. *Hawthorne* = *The Scarlet Letter*. Boston, 1889.
26. *Holmes* = *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. Boston, 1889.

27. *Hooker* = Morley, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Pref. and Bk. I. London, 1888.
28. *Hughes* = Tom Brown's *School Days*. New York, 1888.
29. *Irving* = Oliver Goldsmith. New York, 1859.  
= *Knickerbocker's History of New York*. Phila., 1873.  
= *Conquest of Granada*. Chicago, n. d.
30. *Jefferson* = *Autobiography*. New York, 1890.
31. *Johnson* = *The History of Rasselas*. New York, 1882.
32. *Jonson* = Morley, *Discoveries*. London, 1889.
33. *Latimer* = Morley, *Sermons on the Card*. New York, 1886.
34. *Lewes* = *Life of Goethe*. London, 1864.
35. *Lodge* = Morley, *Rosalind*. New York, 1887.
36. *Lowell* = *Among my Books*. 2 vols. Boston, 1890.
37. *Lylly* = Arber, *Euphues: The Anatomy of Wit*. London, 1868.
38. *Macaulay* = *Essays*. Vol. I. New York, 1885.
39. *Marlowe* = Ellis, *Plays*. London, 1887.
40. *Marprelate* = Petheram, *Martin Marprelate Tracts* (*Epistle*, *Epitome*, and *Hay any work for Cooper*). London, 1842-45.
41. *Milton* = Morley, *English Prose Writings*. London, 1889.  
= Browne, *English Poems*. 2 vols. Oxford, 1887.
42. *Mitchell* = *Reveries of a Bachelor*. New York, 1889.
43. *More* = Lumby, *History of King Richard III*. Cambridge, 1883.
44. *Murfree* = *The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains*. Boston, 1889.
45. *Nashe* = Grosart, *Martin's Month's Minde*, in *The Complete Works of Nashe*, I. 141-205. 1883-84.
46. *Palgrave* (ed.) = *The Golden Treasury*. London, 1890.
47. *Parkman* = *Montcalm and Wolfe*. Vol. I. Boston, 1884.

48. *Pepys* = Braybrooke, *Diary*. Vol. I. London, 1889.
49. *Pope* = Ward, *Essay on Man* and *The Dunciad*. London, 1889.
50. *Rives* = *Barbara Dering*. Philadelphia, 1892.
51. *Ruskin* = *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Chicago, 1889.
52. *Scott* = *Ivanhoe*. New York, 1883.  
= Montgomery, *Marmion*. Boston, 1891.
53. *Shakespeare* = Rolfe: *Twelfth Night*, *Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *King Henry IV*, Pts. I and II. New York, 1890.
54. *Sidney* = Morley, *A Defence of Poesie*. London, 1889.
55. *Spenser* = Child, *The Faery Queene*. Bk. I. Boston, 1855.
56. *Stevenson* = *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Prince Otto*. New York, 1887.
57. *Swift* = Morley, *A Tale of a Tub*. London, 1889.
58. *Thackeray* = *Henry Esmond* and *Vanity Fair*. New York, 1885.
59. *Walpole* = Yonge, *Letters*. Vol. I. New York, 1890.
60. *Walton* = Morley, *Lives of Donne, Hooker, Wotton, and Herbert*. London, 1888.
61. *Whipple* = *Recollections of Eminent Men*. Boston, 1886.

#### I. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE ENGLISH.

In giving his results as to the occurrence of the absolute participle in Anglo-Saxon Callaway says [l. c. p. 51 (3)]:

“Though seemingly frequent in some of the closer Anglo-Saxon translations from the Latin, the absolute participle occurs there chiefly in certain favorite phrases. In the freer translations the absolute participle is less frequent, is found mostly in certain collocations, and, moreover, wavers between an absolute and an attributive use. In the more independ-

ent literature the absolute participle is practically unknown. Hence the absolute construction is not an organic idiom of the Anglo-Saxon language."

If this is the condition of the construction in Anglo-Saxon, what is it in Middle English? A brief examination of the occurrence of the absolute participle in this latter period will show whether or not it has become an organic idiom of the language.

I divide Middle English into two periods:

1. 1150-1350;
2. 1350-1500.

#### 1. 1150-1350.

The results in this period were so barren that only a small portion of the literature was read. This, however, was representative.

##### *The Ancren Riwle.*

One example of the absolute participle:

306—"Pe sorie sunfule thus biset, hwu schal him þeonne stonden?"

##### *St. Julian.*

One example of the absolute participle:

54, 4—"Te edie meiden . . . Com baldeliche forð biuoren þene reue . . . hire nebscheft schininde." The same construction occurs in the corresponding MS., Bodl. 34.

The other texts of this period—*Havelok*, *King Horn*, *Hampole*, and *Gamelyn*—do not contain a single example of the absolute participle.

#### 2. 1350-1500.

##### *Chaucer's Poems.*

Chaucer shows in his poetry a florescence of the absolute participle during the second half of the fourteenth century.

But when we consider how much he wrote, what influences dominated him, and how comparatively few examples he furnishes of the construction, it will be seen how foreign the idiom was to the Middle English writer.

(a) Present participles (14) :

II. 70—“*Smokyng the temple*, . . .

This Emelye with herte debonaire  
Hir body wessch.”

IV. 120—“*Sche, this in blake, likynge to Troylus*,  
Over alle thinge he stode for to beholde.”

*Fil. I. xxx. 1*—“*Piacende questa sotto il nero manto*  
Oltre ad ogn’ altra a Troilo . . .  
*Mirava di lontano.”*

IV. 130—“*Biwayllynge in his chaumber thus allone*,  
A frende of his that called was Pandare,  
Come ones unwar.”

*Fil. II. i. 1*—“*Standosi in cotal guisa un dì soletto*  
Nella camera sua *Troilo pensoso*,  
Vi sopravvenne un troian giovinetto.”

IV. 301—“*Lyggynge in oost* . . . . .  
The Grekes stronge aboute Troye town,  
Byfel,” etc.

*Fil. IV. i. 1*—“*Tenendo i Greci la cittade stretta*  
Con forte assedio ; Ettor . . .  
. . . . . fe’ seletta,” etc.

Other examples : II. 237, 300, 302, 311, III. 69 (2 exs.),  
240, IV. 296, V. 233 (2 exs.).

(b) Past participles (15) :

II. 14—“*The cause i-knōwe*, . . . . .  
Anon he yaf the syke man his bote.”

IV. 305—“*The cause itolde of hire comynge*, the olde  
Priam . . . . .  
Let here-upon his parlement to holde.”

### *Chaucer's Boethius.*

*Ch. Boeth.* 2. 5—"I sawh . . a woman hyr eyen brennyngē  
and cleer seyngē" = *Lat. Bk. I. Pr. 1. 4*—"Visa est mulier  
. . . oculis ardentibus, et . . . perspicacibus." Other examples  
(6): *Ch. Boeth.* 5. 16 (*Lat. Bk. I. Pr. 3. 1*), 6. 1 (*Lat. Bk. I.  
Pr. 3*), 9. 14 (*Lat. Bk. I. Pr. 4*), 69. 6 (*Lat. Bk. III. Po. 9. 23*),  
86. 21 (*Lat. Bk. IV. Pr. 1. 35*).

In Chaucer's *Boethius* there are eight absolute participles, which eight correspond to seven ablatives absolute in the Latin ; in 5. 16 the two participles are synonyms. Hence we see that every absolute participle in Chaucer's *Boethius* is due to an original ablative absolute. In the Latin there are altogether sixty-six ablatives absolute : seven are rendered as above, and

the remainder are otherwise used by him. He almost studiously avoids the use of the absolute participle.

*Chaucer's Tale of Melibeus.*

Ch. Melib. 184—"He schulde nought be cleped a gentil man, that . . . alle thinges left, ne doth his diligence to kepe his good name" = *Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 225—"Il ne doit pas estre dit gentils homs, qui toutes autres choses arrière mises, . . . n'a grant diligence de garder sa bonne renommée." Other example: *Ch. Melib.* 194 (*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 233).

*Chaucer's Persones Tale.*

No example found.

*Chaucer's Astrolabe.*

One example occurs: 34.

*Langland's Vision.*

Three examples are found in the B-text: XIII. 280, XVII. 212, XIX. 162. This last example is doubtless due to the ablative absolute in the Vulgate—John, xx. 26.

*The Romaunt of the Rose.*

Only one example:

*Romaunt*, 6123—  
 “I wole and charge thee,  
 To telle anoon thy wonyng places,  
*Heryng ech wight that in this place is.*”

*Roman*, 11157<sup>1</sup>—“Convient-il, . . . sans faille,  
 Que ci tes mansions nous somes  
 Tantost oians trestous nos homes.”

<sup>1</sup> Michel's numbering with his error of 600 lines corrected.

*Oians* is the same as a preposition here, being equivalent to *coram*.

## *Wyclif's Prose Works.*

In considering the absolute participle in Wyclif a sharp line of distinction must be drawn between his original English works and his translation of the Vulgate. In the former the construction is so rare that not a single example was found in Arnold's first volume<sup>1</sup>; in the first version of the latter the construction is very common. An examination of its occurrence in the Gospels shows how very slavish was this translation. Out of the two hundred and seventeen ablatives absolute in these Gospels the Anglo-Saxon translator rendered only sixty-six into the dative absolute. But Wyclif went further than this: in his translation there are one hundred and eighty-eight absolute participles (fifty-three of which are certainly datives absolute) corresponding to one hundred and eighty-seven ablatives absolute.<sup>2</sup> It is a noticeable fact that Purvey, in his revision of Wyclif's translation only a few years after, did away with almost every absolute participle. Skeat's<sup>3</sup> remark (p. xi) is eminently just: "Wycliffe's literal translations are somewhat awkward, and are hardly intelligible; whereas Purvey's paraphrases, though less literal, convey just the sense required in the English idiom." One example will suffice to show this:

<sup>1</sup> Only one volume of *Wyclif* was read on account of the extreme scarcity of examples. The same was the case with *Pecock*.

<sup>2</sup> Comparative Table of Absolute Participles in Wyclif's and the Latin Gospels.

	LATIN.	WYCLIF.
<i>Matthew</i> , . . . . .	64	62
<i>Mark</i> , . . . . .	46	49
<i>Luke</i> , . . . . .	65	65
<i>John</i> , . . . . .	12	12
<b>Total</b> , . . . . .	<b>187</b>	<b>188</b>

<sup>3</sup> Skeat, W.W.: Introd. to Forshall and Madden's *New Testament of Wycliffe and Purvey*. Oxford, 1879.

*Mark*, i. 32—

*Vulgat*. “*Vespere autem factio, . . . afferebant ad eum omnes male habentes.*”

*Wyclif*. “*Forsythe the euenyngē maad, . . . thei broughten to him alle hauyngē yuel.*”

*Purvey*. “*But whanne the euentid was come,*” etc.

*Gower.*

Thirteen examples of the absolute participle: i. 27 (2 exs.), 115, 217; ii. 150, 370; iii. 62, 200, 260, 287, 339, 358, 363.

*Mandeville*.<sup>1</sup>

*Mand. Hall*. 2—“It is the Herte and the myddes of all the World; *wytnessyng the Philosophere*, that seythe thus” = *Mand.*<sup>2</sup> 1.25—“Ceo est luy corps et ly mylieux de tote la terre de monde, et auxi, *come dit le philosophere*.” Other examples (5): *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> 19.22 (*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> has finite verb), *Mand. Hall*. 40 (*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> 20.45), *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> 45.25 (*Mand. Hall*. 91—*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> has prepositional phrase), *Mand. Hall*. 234 (*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> has finite verb), *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> 121.6 (*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> has adverbial predicate). *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> 45.25 is really due to direct influence of the *Vulgat* or *Wyclif*’s translation of the same; cf. *John*, xx. 26. The same is the case with *Langland B.* xix. 162 (C. xxii. 167).

*Hoccleve.*

Thirteen examples of the absolute participle: 24, 59, 87, 110 (2 exs.), 140, 148, 165, 171, 211 (2 exs.), 221, 222.

*The Paston Letters.*

One hundred and eleven examples of the absolute participle.

<sup>1</sup> It is now held by scholars that *Mandeville* was not the translator of the English work that bears his name; but for convenience’ sake I shall give his name to this work.



*La Tour-Landry.*

*Landry*<sup>1</sup> 17—"Ther was moche speche, mani folk susteninge to take the elder" = *Landry*<sup>2</sup> 26—"Y fut assez parlé de chascune d'elles, et y eut assés qui soustenoient à prandre l'ainsnée." Other examples (2): *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 98 (*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 152), 174 (*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 250).

*The Story of Constance.*

*Constance*<sup>1</sup> 246—"All thing lefte, he shall putte hymselfe before the kyng of England" = *Constance*<sup>2</sup> 47—"Totes autres choses lessetz, se meit de-u-aunt le Roi dengleterre." Another example: *Constance*<sup>1</sup> 242 (*Constance*<sup>2</sup> doubtful).

*York Mystery Plays.*

No example of the absolute participle.

*James I.*

Two examples of the absolute participle: st. 64.6, 104.1.

*Pecock.*

Seven examples of the absolute participle in the first volume: 49 (2 exs.), 80, 204 (2 exs.), 242 (2 exs.).

*Malory.*

Twenty-four examples of the absolute participle: I. 119, 168, 178, 185, 186, 187, 274; II. 63, 83 (2 exs.), 192, 230, 232 (2 exs.), 276, 346; III. 29, 128 (*Map* 153), 143, 248 (2 exs.), 257 (2 exs.), 302.

*Fortescue.*

Two examples of the absolute participle: 108, 136.

*Paris and Vienna.*

Fifteen examples of the absolute participle : 10, 20, 25, 37, 39, 40, 46, 48, 66, 67, 72, 74 (2 exs.), 75, 81.

*Ballads.*

Eleven examples of the absolute participle : I. 65, 86, 91 (2 exs.), 181 ; II. 68 (2 exs.), 104, 223, 301, 385. Three of these—86, 91 (2)—occur in a ballad of which the date is 1596.

Having gone through the Middle English texts that were read and having noted the occurrence of the absolute participle in them, it is time to seek for the origin and the cause of the development of this construction in Middle English. Before entering upon this discussion, however, it may be best to notice the remarks of Einenkel<sup>1</sup> on the origin of the construction. He says (p. 69) :

“ Das AE . . . eine Nachbildung des lateinischen Ablativus absolutus besass und zwar in seinem absoluten Dativ. Es wäre nun von vornherein das Natürliche gewesen, wenn die Entwicklung der betreffenden ME Formeln von der Basis dieser einheimischen absoluten Construction ausgegangen wäre. Abgesehen jedoch davon, dass die mit Hülfe von Participien gebildeten Formeln nur einen kleinen Teil der hier in Frage kommenden Formarten darstellen, so spricht zunächst gegen eine Weiterbildung dieses AE absoluten Dativs der Umstand, dass im ME, wo fast unter allen Umständen der Dativ mit Hülfe der Präposition *to* aufgelöst werden kann, die absolute Construction wol durch *after*, *with*, nie aber mit Hülfe der Präposition *to* umschrieben wird. Ferner war der AE absolute Dativ eine fast ausschliesslich gelehrtede Redeform und auch als solche durchaus nicht in so häufigem Gebrauche, dass sie eine langere Lebensdauer hätte haben oder einen tieferen Einfluss auf die Weiterentwicklung der Sprache hätte ausüben können.

<sup>1</sup> Einenkel, E. : *Streifzüge durch die mitteleng. Syntax.* Münster, 1887.

“ Wir sehen also, trotz des gewiss starken und nachhaltigen Einflusses des lateinischen Ablativus absolutus, der einer derartigen Aenderung zweifellos hinderlich sein musste, ist der AE absolute Dativ dennoch zu Gunsten des Afranz. absoluten Accusatives aufgegeben worden.”

The criticism to be made on Einenkel’s statements is that the same rule is applied to the whole of Middle English. On the contrary, it is necessary to divide the period (as I have done in discussing the separate texts) into two parts, in each of which we see different influences at work on the development of the absolute construction. The first extends to about the middle of the fourteenth century. In this period, as is seen by the infrequency of occurrence, the construction is practically non-existent, especially in the poetry; and where it does occur in the prose, it is so sporadic that we must, I think, trace this occurrence not to any influence of Old French, but rather to a survival of the Anglo-Saxon construction. If this is not allowed, then we must trace the construction to a slight Latin influence that was present in English at the time by reason of the cultivation of Latin literature. The occurrence of the construction is so infrequent that it is almost impossible to find the cause of its origin. French had not yet exerted any appreciable influence in this direction; for, as Lounsbury<sup>1</sup> says (p. 42), “we have . . . the singular spectacle of two tongues flourishing side by side in the same country, and yet for centuries so utterly distinct and independent, that neither can be said to have exerted much direct appreciable influence upon the other, though in each case the indirect influence was great.” It is, therefore, safe to conclude that in our first period of Middle English we have an absolute participial construction that is most likely a survival of the Anglo-Saxon dative absolute.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lounsbury, T. R.: *History of the English Language*. New York, 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Callaway has clearly and conclusively shown that the Anglo-Saxon construction was borrowed from the Latin; hence it seems strange to see this statement in Kellner’s recent work (*Hist. Outlines of Eng. Syntax*, London, 1892, p. 34): “It is doubtful whether the Absolute Participle in Old Eng-

But when English gained the victory over French not only as the language of the people but also as the language of literature, a change was effected in the use and occurrence of the absolute construction. The influence of French<sup>1</sup> became perceptible, and the construction became more frequent during the second half of the fourteenth century and the whole of the fifteenth century. Its sphere of usefulness was thus expanded. But as in Anglo-Saxon the construction is a stranger, and as yet it has not become an organic idiom of the language. And in the whole range of Middle English literature there are only two monuments in which it may be said to occur somewhat commonly : Chaucer's poems and the *Paston Letters*. It now remains for me to show that in these the frequency of occurrence of the absolute participle was largely, if not entirely, due to immediate or special foreign influences.

I shall first consider the poems of Chaucer. In all his genuine poems there are twenty-nine clear examples of the absolute participle, and all these examples can be accounted for as being due to French or Italian influence. Thirteen of these are found in *Troylus and Cryseyde*, the poem possibly most strongly under Italian influence : six of these are direct or almost direct translations of the corresponding absolute constructions in the Italian, and of the remaining seven four are indirect translations of a favorite Italian expression—"considerando." It is natural to suppose that the three other examples in the poem are due to Italian influence, as the absolute construction abounds in *Il Filostrato*. The *Canterbury Tales*, more than twice the length of *Troylus and Cryseyde*, contain only nine examples, and these

lish and in the other Teutonic dialects is akin to similar constructions in Latin and Greek and thus of Aryan origin, or whether it is only borrowed from Latin." A study of the construction in English since 1150 leads to the belief that it is really a borrowing, directly or indirectly, from Latin during the whole of its history.

<sup>1</sup> French influence will be more fully treated in the next section.

are most likely due to French or Italian influence. This leaves seven examples in the other poems, and these examples are so isolated as to be scarcely felt.

I next take up the three volumes of the *Paston Letters*. In these there are one hundred and eleven examples of the absolute participle. Sixty-four of these are found in the letters proper where the nearest approach to vernacular English is to be seen. The remaining forty-seven are found in various documents, such as petitions, Sir John Fastolf's will, the account of the Battle of St. Albans, etc., in which the style is involved and the influence of Latin seems prominent. Among the letters are several from a Friar Brackley to various persons which show strong traces both of Latin and of French influence. I therefore conclude that nearly one-half of the examples are due to an almost direct influence either of Latin or of French.

*Notes.*—Several points may be treated of here that cannot properly come under the regular heads of the work: (1) Callaway (l. c. p. 21) mentions that "occasionally the A. S. absolute clause is incorrectly joined to the chief sentence by a conjunction." This practice is very common in Middle English, and the absolute clause is thereby obscured. Four examples of this use occur in *Malory* alone, and the practice continues down into very recent English; as, for example, Lowell's *Latest Literary Essays*, p. 86. (2) In some of the examples cited where the subject of the absolute clause and that of the main clause are in apposition, as in *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 98, there is doubt as to whether the subordinate clause is really absolute. Possibly many such examples may be like this from Wyclif: *John*, xix. 28—"Jhesu witinge . . . that the scripture schulde be fillid, he seith," etc. = *Vulgate*—"Sciens Jesus . . . ut consummaretur Scriptura, dixit," etc. In the poetry (as in *Ch. Poems* III. 124), the superfluous substantives may be almost always looked on as introduced for the sake of the metre. (3) In such a sentence as "They went away, *the one here, the other there*," the italicized phrases are to be looked on rather as appositive than absolute. This is borne out by the Old French construction: "Se misent en la forest, *li vns cha, et li autres la*"—*Map* 22. Here the nominative of the article is used, while the absolute case in Old French is the accusative. A Modern English example shows this apposition clearly: "We have two accusatives of slightly different functions: *the one indicating the object, . . . the other indicating the result*"—Strong, Logeman, and Wheeler: *The Hist. of Lang.*, p. 281.

TABLE OF MIDDLE ENGLISH ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLES.

WORK.	PTCS.	WORK.	PTCS.
<i>Ancren Riwle</i> .....	1	<i>Hoccleve</i> .....	13
<i>Ballads</i> .....	11	<i>Horn</i> .....	0
<i>Caxton</i> .....	15	<i>James I</i> .....	2
<i>Ch. Astrol</i> .....	1	<i>Juliana</i> .....	1
<i>Ch. Boeth</i> .....	8	<i>Landry</i> <sup>1</sup> .....	3
<i>Ch. Melib</i> .....	2	<i>Langland</i> .....	3
<i>Ch. Person</i> .....	0	<i>Malory</i> .....	24
<i>Ch. Poems</i> .....	29	<i>Mandeville</i> .....	6
<i>Constance</i> <sup>1</sup> .....	2	<i>Paston</i> .....	111
<i>Fortescue</i> .....	2	<i>Pecock</i> .....	7
<i>Gamelyn</i> .....	0	<i>Romarunt</i> .....	1
<i>Gower</i> .....	13	<i>Wyclif Pr</i> .....	0
<i>Hampole</i> .....	0	<i>York</i> .....	0
<i>Havelok</i> <sup>1</sup> .....	0	Total.....	255

## II. THE INFLUENCE OF OLD FRENCH AND ITALIAN ON THE MIDDLE ENGLISH ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE.

Before discussing in general the question of the influence of Old French and Italian, let us examine the texts compared and see how Middle English renders the Old French and Italian absolute participles.

### 1. OLD FRENCH.

#### (a) *Le Lai d'Havelok le Danois*.

The English author of *The Lay of Havelok* translated only a few passages with an approach to literalness, and in these only one absolute participle (which is really a preposition) occurs: *Havelok*<sup>2</sup> l. 218—"Primerement li fet jurer,  
*Veiant sa gent*, et affier."

The English paraphrases this passage, and the absolute clause is not rendered.

(b) *Histoire de Mellibée.*

*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 191—"Nous demandons délibération, *laquelle eue*, nous te conseillerons . . . chose qui sera à ton proufit" = *Ch. Melib.* 145—"We axe deliberacioun; and we schul thanne . . . conseile the thing that schal be profytable."

*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 192—"Ce dit, il s'assist comme tout honteulx" = *Ch. Melib.* 146—"Al schamefast, he sette him doun agayn."

*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 203—"Tu dois tousjours eslire ce qui est ton prouffit, toutes autres choses refusées et rabatues" = *Ch. Melib.* 158—"Thou schalt chese the beste, and *weyve alle other thinges.*"

*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 211—"Ta personne destruite, tu scez bien que tes richesses se divisoront en diverses parties" = *Ch. Melib.* 168—"Ye knowe also, that youre richesses mooten in divers parties be departed."

*Melib.*<sup>2</sup> 232—"Lors les amis Mellibée, toutes choses considérées et icelles dessusdictes mesmes delibérées et examinées, donnèrent conseil de paix faire" = *Ch. Melib.* 192—"Whan Melibeus frendes hadde take here avys and deliberacioun of the forsayde matier, and hadden examyned it, . . . they yafe him counsail to have pees."

In *Ch. Melib.* there are only two absolute participles, both due to two in the French. In *Melib.*<sup>2</sup> there are eight absolute participles besides the two just mentioned: two of these have really no equivalent, and the remaining six are rendered by finite verbs.

(c) *Le Roman de la Rose.*

*Roman* 1689—"Li diex d'Amors qui, *l'arc tendu*,  
Avoit toute jor atendu  
A moi porsivre et espier."

*Romaunt* 1715—"The god of love, *with bowe bent*,  
That alle day sette hadde his talent  
To pursuen and to spien me."

*Roman* 1892—"Lors est tout maintenant venus  
Li diex d'Amors *les sains menuis.*"

*Romaunt* 1928—"The God of Love delyverly  
Come *lepande* to me hastily."

In the *Romaunt* there is only one absolute participle—a translation simply of the French absolute participle. In the *Roman* there are only two other examples, both of which are rendered otherwise in the *Romaunt*.

(d) *Mandeville.*

*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> 79.28—"Bons dyamantz, qi semblent de colour trouble, *cristal ianuastre trehant a doile*" = *Mand. Hall.* 157—"Gode Dyamandes, that ben of trouble Colour. *Zalow Cristalle drawethe Colour lyke Oylle.*"

*Mand.*<sup>2</sup> 143.19—"Vait toutdis *goule baie*" = *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> 143.1—"It . . . gase all way *with ye mouth open.*"

In *Mand.*<sup>1</sup> and *Mand. Hall.* there are six examples of the absolute participle, two of which are translations of the French absolute construction (in one case a preposition is the predicate), and four of which are rendered from a finite verb or a prepositional clause. Besides the absolute participle in O. F. just mentioned, there are two others in *Mand.*<sup>2</sup>: one is rendered in *Mand. Hall.* by a finite verb, and the other by a prepositional phrase.

(e) *La Tour-Landry.*

*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 6—"Ce fait, l'on se puet bien endormir" [so 129 (not in Eng.)] = *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 5—"Whanne this is done, thanne ye may slepe the beter."

*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 123—"Si vint courant l'espée nue" = *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 78—"He droughe his cuerde."

The Eng. translation is not always literal, and very often, as in this case, it merely paraphrases the original text.

*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 134—"Son yre passée, elle luy puet bien monstrer qu'il avoit tort" = *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 85—"Wharine hys yre is passed, she may welle shew unto hym that he had wronge."

*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 205—"Celle . . . saillist au dehors, *les bras tenduz*"=*Landry*<sup>1</sup> 141—"She comithe forthe with gret ioye and embrased hym *betwene her armes*."

*Landry*<sup>2</sup> 286—"Ilz saillirent encontre, *lui faisant grant ioye*"=*Landry*<sup>1</sup> 201—"They went and met him *with gret ioye*."

In *Landry*<sup>1</sup> there are three absolute participles: two are renderings for a finite verb in the French, and one is rendered from an adjectival phrase in the French. *Landry*<sup>2</sup> contains six absolute participles: two of these are rendered in English by a finite verb, two by a prepositional phrase, and two are not rendered at all.

(f) *Constance.*

*Constance*<sup>2</sup> 37—"Veuz lez lettres, ia le Roy les lettres riens ne conysoit qil vist de son seal assellez"=*Constance*<sup>1</sup> 243—"Whan these letteres were seen, than the kyng merueled."

In *Constance*<sup>1</sup> are three absolute participles (one doubtful): one corresponds to an absolute participle in *Constance*<sup>2</sup>, a second is rendered from a finite verb in the French, and a third is the translation of a prepositional phrase (?). In *Constance*<sup>2</sup> there is another absolute participle which is rendered by a finite verb in *Constance*<sup>1</sup>.

(g) *La Queste del Saint Graal.*

In comparing this prose romance of Walter Map<sup>1</sup> with the corresponding English of Malory, this must be remembered: the Eng. adaptation (it can hardly be called a translation) is an abridged paraphrase, in which Malory very rarely expands Map, but very often abridges the story. For the strict purposes of comparison, such a text as this is not good; but it is valuable in showing what seemingly little influence it had on Malory as regards the absolute construction.

<sup>1</sup>I follow Mr. Furnivall in assigning this romance to Map, though I believe the consensus of opinion now is against Map's authorship.

*Map* 77—"Si se fiert entr' aus, le glaive alongiet" = *Malory* 93—"Then he dressed him toward the twenty men, *with his spear in the rest.*" So *Map* 79 (*Malory* 94—"set his speare"), *Map* 117 (*Malory* 108—"they put before them their speares").

*Map* 205—"Si lor courrent sus, les espees traitez" = *Malory* 159—"They . . . *with their swords* slew them downe right."

In *Malory* there are two absolute participles, one of which corresponds to an absolute participle in *Map* and the other has no French equivalent. In *Map*, besides the one already mentioned, there are seventeen absolute participles: two are rendered in English by a finite verb, two by a prepositional phrase, one by an object of the verb, and twelve have no correspondences at all in *Malory*.

If we can judge from the foregoing statistics, the influence of Old French on the Middle English absolute participle was not great. As we have seen, there seems to have been no appreciable influence before the middle of the fourteenth century. Besides the regular form of the absolute participle the prepositions that were originally participles, such as *except*, *save*, *notwithstanding*, are very rarely found before 1350. After that time they occur in large numbers, not only in translations but also in the native literature. That the Old French construction did not exercise any very great influence on the Middle English absolute participle, beyond keeping the form alive in the language and increasing its occurrence, is true for two reasons:

1. The small number of absolute participles that occur in Middle English after 1350. It is true that in all the Old French texts read the absolute participle is strikingly infrequent, but even the English does not equal the French as regards occurrence (Mandeville's work is an exception). Compare, for example, the works of *Map* and *Malory*.

2. The Old French absolute case is the accusative, and yet during the Middle English period the absolute case changes its form from dative to nominative. There seems, therefore, no influence of Old French here.

Striking and important as was the influence of Old French on the phonology, inflections and vocabulary of Middle English, we can see how small it was in this particular feature of the syntax. It increased the occurrence of the absolute participle and enlarged its scope and meaning, but it failed to hold the form to an oblique case like itself. Probably Nehry's<sup>1</sup> observation (p. 55) on the occurrence of the absolute participle in Old French will explain, in part at least, this lack of a strong influence of that language on the Middle English absolute construction :

"Im Afz. zeigt sich diese Art des absoluten Accus. am häufigsten in gewissen Formeln des Kanzleistils, wo ebenfalls lateinisch-gelehrter Einfluss sich unstreitig geltend macht, oder in Uebersetzungen lateinischer Originale. Die volkstümlichen Dichtungen scheinen derselben fast ganz zu entbehren ; ebenso geben die hauptsächlichsten geschichtlichen Prosawerke des Afz. nur geringe Ausbeute an hierhergehörigen Citaten."

There is, however, a special kind of Old French influence that deserves consideration. This is the transference into Middle English of French prepositions that were originally absolute participles. Through analogy to these forms Modern English has employed a number of present and a few past participles in almost the same manner. The following is an incomplete list of these words, some of which must be classed as adverbs and conjunctions : According to, admitting, allowing, assuming, barring, bating, calling, coming to, conceding, concerning, considering, counting, during, excepting, forgetting, granting, including, judging, laying aside, leaving aside, letting alone, making, making allowance, meaning, notwithstanding, omitting, owing to, passing, pending, providing, putting, reckoning, regarding, respecting, reversing, saving, seeing that, setting apart (aside), speaking, supposing, taking, talking (followed by of, about), touching, using, waiving ; admitted, ago,

<sup>1</sup> Nehry, H.: *Ueber den Gebrauch des absolut. Casus obliquus des alfranz. Substantivs.* Berliner Diss. Berlin, 1882.

considered, except, given, out take (out taken or outaken—Mid. Eng.), past, provided, save, set apart (aside).

The origin of these prepositions is thus explained by Chevallet<sup>1</sup> (p. 365): “Ces mots ne sont, à proprement parler, que des participes présents. Les cas où ils sont considérés comme prépositions sont dus à un usage particulier de notre ancienne langue. Nos pères plaçaient souvent le participe avant le substantif auquel il se rapporte, dans certaines tournures équivalentes à l’ablatif absolu des Latins.”

## 2. ITALIAN.<sup>2</sup>

*Fil.* i. vii. 6—“Ognor la stringean più di giorno in giorno,  
Concordi tutti in un pari volere.”

*Ch.* iv. 110—“The cité longe  
Asseghezen, nygh ten yer er they stente,  
And in dyverise wise and oon intente.”

*Fil.* i. xviii. 1—“Perchè venuto il vago tempo il quale  
Riveste i prati d’erbette e di fiori,

Li troian padri al Palladio fatale  
Fer preparar li consueti onori.”

*Ch.* iv. 114—“And so byfel, whan comen was the tyme  
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede

The folke of Troye hire observaunces olde,  
Palladyones feste for to holde.”

*Fil.* i. xxxiii. 1—“E partitosi ognun, tutto soletto  
In camera n’andò.”

*Ch.* iv. 122—“And when that he in chaumber was allon,  
He down . . . . . him sette.”

<sup>1</sup> Chevallet, A. de: *Origine et Formation de la Langue Française*. 3rd ed. Tome III. Paris, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> In comparing Chaucer and his original I was very much indebted to Mr. W. M. Rossetti’s admirable comparison of *Troylus and Cryseyde* and *Il Filostrato*, published by the Chaucer Society.

- Petrarch*, 88th sonnet, l. 13— “Io . . .  
 . . tremo a mezza state, *ardendo il verno.*”
- Ch.* iv. 124— “What is this wonder maladye?  
 For *hete of cold*, for *cold of hete* I dye.”
- Fil.* II. xiii. 3—“*Così facendo* passano i martirj.”
- Ch.* IV. 136—“So may thi woful tyme seme lesse.”
- Fil.* II. xlix. 8— “Ed ho doglioso  
 Il cuore ancor della sua morte ria,  
 Ed avrò sempre mente saro in vita,  
*Tornandomi a memoria sua partita.*”
- Ch.* IV. 170— “Allas, I woful wreche!  
 Might he yit lyve, of me is nought to reche.”
- Fil.* II. lxviii. 1—“*Partito Pandar*, se ne gî soletta  
 Nella camera sua Griseida bella.”
- Ch.* IV. 177—“With this he toke his leve, and home he wente;  
 . . . . .  
 Criseyde aros, . . . . .  
 . . streght into hire closet wente anon.”
- Fil.* III. xl. 1—“*Rassi curati insieme i due amanti*,  
 Insieme incominciaro a ragionare.”
- Ch.* IV. 282—“Thisel ilke two, . . . . .  
 Whan that hire hertes wel assured were,  
 Tho gonnes they to speken.”
- Fil.* IV. xxxviii. 3—“O vecchio malvissuto, . . . . .  
 Qual fantasia ti mosse . . . . .  
 A gire a'Greci essendo tu *Troiano?*”
- Ch.* IV. 313—“Calkas . . . allas! what aylede the  
 To ben a Greke, *syn thow ert born Trojan?*”
- Fil.* IV. civ. 4—“Ma 'l suo m'è digran lunga maggiore,  
*Udendo che per me la morte brama.*”
- Ch.* IV. 336—“But yet to me his sorwe is muchel more,  
 . . . . .  
 Allas, *for me hath he swich hevynesse.*”
- Fil.* IV. cxx. 1—“*E fatto questo*, con animo forte  
 La propria spada del fodero trasse.”

- Ch.* iv. 348—"And *after this*, with sterne and cruel herte,  
                   His swerde anon out of his shethe he twyghte."
- Fil.* iv. clxvii. 7—"Ciascun, l'un l'altro sè raccomandando,  
                   E così dipartirsi lagrimando."
- Ch.* iv. 369—"And to hire grace *he gan hym recomaunde*."
- Fil.* v. xlvi. 7—"Ver le lor case si son ritornati;  
                   *Troilo dicendo pel cammino*."
- Ch.* v. 21—"And on hire weye they spedden hem to wende;  
                   *Quod Troilus*," etc.
- Sim.* *Fil.* v. l. 7 (Chaucer turns it by a finite verb—"he seide").
- Fil.* vi. xxiii. 3—"E questo detto diventò ver miglio  
                   Come fuoco nel viso, e la favella  
                   Tremante al quanto."
- Ch.* v. 39—"And with that worde he gan to wexen rede,  
                   And in his speche a litel while he quooke."
- Fil.* vii. xi. 7—"Infine essendo il ciel tutto stellato,  
                   Con Pandar dentro se n' è ritornato."
- Ch.* v. 49—"And fer withinne the nyght, . . . . .  
                   This Troilus gan homewarde for to ride."
- Fil.* vii. xiv. 7—"Fatto già notte dentro si tornavo."
- Ch.* v. 50—"For which at nyght . . . . .  
                   He wente hym home."
- Fil.* vii. lxxvii. 2—"Di giorno in giorno il suo dolor crescea  
                   Mancando la speranza."
- Ch.* v. 59—"Encressen gan the wo fro day to nyght  
                   Of Troilus . . . . . . . . .  
                   And lessen gan his hope."

In those parts of the poem translated by Chaucer there occur eight examples of the absolute construction that have no equivalents, direct or indirect, in Chaucer.

We can draw two conclusions from Chaucer's translation of *Il Filostrato* as far as the absolute construction is concerned :

1. The statistics show that Chaucer was under the domination of the Italian absolute construction in his translation, and to this fact is due the comparatively large number of

examples in this poem. *Troylus and Cryseyde* contains nearly fifty per cent. of all the absolute participles in Chaucer's poems.

2. It is highly probable that the influence of this Italian construction caused Chaucer to use the absolute participle oftener in his other poems.

The question now arises : Did this Italian absolute construction exercise any influence on the Middle English absolute participle outside of Chaucer? There is no reason for believing that it did, either in changing the case of the absolute participle or in increasing the occurrence of the construction. Long before Chaucer the heterogeneousness of the language had caused the absolute case to begin to change its form, and if the construction increased in occurrence after Chaucer, this must rather be attributed to the influence of French or Latin. To show how superficially Italian literature touched even Chaucer in a linguistic way, only the fact needs to be cited, that, as regards vocabulary, Chaucer drew only one word directly from Italian. And, as Prof. Skeat<sup>1</sup> says (p. 296), "after Chaucer's death, the temporary contact with Italian literature was broken." As regards the absolute construction Italian and English are two streams that flow along side by side without mingling. Italian, as being closer to the Latin, shows early the idiom in large numbers, but such is not at once the case with English. Both, however, are alike in showing a shifting of the form of the absolute case from accusative to nominative.

### III. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MODERN ENGLISH.

I begin my discussion of the absolute participle in Modern English with the opening of the sixteenth century, and here the remarks of Earle<sup>2</sup> on English prose in general at this

<sup>1</sup>Skeat, W. W.: *Principles of English Etymology*. 2nd Series. Oxford, 1891.

<sup>2</sup>Earle, J.: *English Prose*. New York, 1891.

period of the language are especially appropriate. He says (pp. 424-25) :

"The Third great era of our Prose receives its character from that wide diffusion of classical taste through the channels of education, which was the natural consequence of the Revival of Ancient Learning in the Fifteenth century. . . . It did not take many generations to develop a scholastic English prose which stood apart from the type of the Fifteenth century, even while it was built upon it. A learned style *within* the native language was the new thing that now appeared. In the former era, the learned style was either Latin or French, while English prose was homely and much on a level. This does not mean that there were *no* shades of gradation—there certainly are such, for instance in the Paston Letters—but that they did not form distinct orders of style—such distinction could only be attained at that time by writing in one of the two scholastic languages. But now within the vernacular itself began to appear a classical, learned, scholastic style; and the full significance of this new incident will not develop itself until we come to the Seventeenth century."

It is interesting to note how exactly the history of the development of the absolute participle, a classical importation, confirms this general observation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In treating of the development of the absolute participle, Modern English must be divided into two periods :

1. 1500 to 1660 ;
2. 1660 to the present time.

#### 1. 1500-1660.

*More.*

Fifty-eight examples of the absolute participle.

*Berners.*

Though a translation from the French, the first volume of this work contains only ten examples of the absolute participle.

*Latimer.*

Owing to the homely character of his style, only thirteen examples are found in Latimer.

*Gosson.*

His small treatise contains fourteen examples.

*Lylly.*

The absolute participle is very common here, about sixty examples being found.

*Sidney.*

Twenty-three examples of the absolute participle.

*Lodge.*

Fifty-eight examples of the absolute participle.

*Nashe.*

Eleven examples in his short pamphlet.

*Hooker.*

Earle (l. c. p. 425) speaks of "the diction of Hooker, the author most possessed of Latinity;" and this fact is seen in Hooker's extreme use of the absolute participle. In one hundred and twenty-one pages are found one hundred and seven examples.

*Marprelate.*

In the colloquial and vigorous language of these tracts the absolute participle is not common, twenty-seven examples being found.

*Greene.*

In the play read there occurs no example of the absolute participle.

*Marlowe.*

Twenty-three examples of the absolute participle.

*Spenser.*

Only eighteen examples in Book I.<sup>1</sup>

*Shakespeare.*

Fifty-two examples occur in the six plays read, though twenty of these are found in one play : *King Henry IV, Pt. II.*

*Daniel.*

Nine examples in his short treatise.

*Jonson.*

As his *Discoveries* are written "in a free and easy conversational style" (Minto), they contain only seven examples.

*Bacon.*

Only eighteen examples of the absolute participle; for Bacon "is neither markedly Latinised nor markedly familiar."

<sup>1</sup> In the case of several works in Mod. Eng. want of time prevented a reading of the entire work. However, the portion read was looked on as a sufficient index of the work.

*Browne.*

Thirty-five examples of the absolute participle.

*Milton.*

Milton was peculiarly under the domination of the classical spirit, both in his prose and poetry. His prose contains seventy-four examples, while in his poems are found no less than one hundred and five examples. Many of the latter are in direct imitation of the Latin construction.

*Walton.*

One hundred and eight examples of the absolute participle.

The peculiar conditions under which the absolute participle occurs in the above-named works of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century—viz. occurring but rarely in certain works, and in others in large numbers—show that the form had not become thoroughly naturalized. It limited itself to certain favorite authors where the classical element largely predominated, and was used but sparingly by authors whose style was essentially English.

## 2. 1660 to the Present Time.

Instead of considering separately the authors read, I group them under the following heads :

- (a) Fiction.
- (b) Essays and criticism.
- (c) History.
- (d) Biography.
- (e) Autobiography.
- (f) Letters.
- (g) Poetry.

(a) *Fiction.*

This department of literature is the special province of the absolute participle. Nineteen writers were read. In Bunyan occur forty-nine examples, but this comparatively large number is not surprising when we read the remarks of Minto<sup>1</sup> (p. 304) :

"The language is homely, indeed, but it is not the everyday speech of hinds and tinkers; it is the language of the Church, of the Bible, of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and whatever other literature Bunyan was in the habit of perusing. As for the 'old unpolluted English language,' it needs no microscopical eye to detect in the *Pilgrim's Progress* a considerable sprinkling of vulgar provincialisms, and even of such Latin idioms as are to be found in his favourite old martyrologist Foxe."

In Swift occur fifty-seven examples of the absolute participle; in Fielding, one hundred and seventy-three; in Johnson, only three; in Goldsmith, forty-seven; in Scott, eighty-eight; in Irving, one hundred and thirty-one; in Cooper, eighty; in Dickens (two works), three hundred and forty-one; in Thackeray (two works), four hundred and three; in George Eliot, ninety-one; in Hawthorne, forty-three; in Hughes, one hundred and forty-eight; in Holmes, sixty-seven; in Mitchell, twenty-seven; in Blackmore, one hundred and seventy-two; in Miss Murfree, one hundred and twenty-four; in Stevenson (two works), fifty-nine; in Miss Rives, seventy-seven.

Of all the above writers Johnson is the only exception to the frequency of the absolute participle. A casual reading has shown that the case is the same in his *Lives of the Poets*. What, then, explains this infrequency? Possibly Arnold's<sup>2</sup> remark does (p. xix): "Johnson himself wrote a prose decidedly modern. The reproach conveyed in the phrase 'Johnsonian

<sup>1</sup>Minto, W.: *Manual of Eng. Prose Literature*. Boston, 1889.

<sup>2</sup>Arnold, M.: Pref. to Johnson's *Six Chief Lives*. London, 1886.

English' must not mislead us. It is aimed at his words, not at his structure. In Johnson's prose the words are often pompous and long, but the structure is always plain and modern." Still, other modern writers of fiction and biography use the absolute participle so freely that it is almost impossible to account for Johnson's failure to employ it. The same state of things is seen later in Macaulay.

(b) *Essays and criticism.*

In Dryden are found forty-six examples of the absolute participle; in Addison, forty-six; in Burke, fourteen; in Macaulay, only ten (though the essays read were almost entirely narrative); in Arnold, fourteen; in Lowell, sixty-five; in Whipple, twenty-six; in Ruskin, one hundred and forty (the descriptive character of the work may be the cause of this frequency); in Birrell, thirty-two. The narrative element is largely lacking in Arnold, and in Burke there is really no occasion to use the absolute construction.

(c) *History.*

Naturally in historical composition the absolute participle is comparatively frequent. In Irving occur ninety-nine examples, and in Parkman, sixty-three.

(d) *Biography.*

In Irving are found thirty-four examples; in Lewes, ninety-eight; in Forster, seventy-two; in Froude, one hundred and five.

(e) *Autobiography.*

In this department the absolute participle is even more common than in the preceding. Pepys shows one hundred and eighty-eight examples; Franklin, one hundred and eighty-

three ; De Quincey, twenty-four ; Jefferson, one hundred and fifteen.

(f) *Letters.*

In the colloquial style of this department the absolute participle is not very common. In Walpole occur twenty-six examples, and in Gray, forty-six.

(g) *Poetry.*

Poetry shows a marked increase in occurrence over the first period (1500–1660). Dryden contains forty examples ; Pope, thirty-three ; Goldsmith, fifteen ; Scott, thirty-two ; Mrs. Browning, one hundred and five ; Arnold, forty-six. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, which contains poems of both periods, shows twenty examples. This indicates that the absolute participle is not at home in lyric poetry.

The above statistics raise the question, Why does the absolute participle appear so uniformly common (with varying degrees) in nearly every text of the second period ? The answer is, that the Restoration naturalized it ; for, as Matthew Arnold says (l. c. p. xix), “the Restoration marks the real moment of birth of our modern English prose.” And he says further on the same point :

“ Men of lucid and direct mental habit there were, such as Chillingworth, in whom before the Restoration the desire and the commencement of a modern prose show themselves. There were men like Barrow, weighty and powerful, whose mental habit the old prose suited, who continued its forms and locutions after the Restoration. But the hour was come for the new prose, and it grew and prevailed. . . . The style is ours by its organism, if not by its phrasing. It is by its organism—an organism opposed to length and involvement, and enabling us to be clear, plain, and short,—that English style after the Restoration breaks with the style of the times preceding it, finds the true law of prose, and becomes modern ; becomes, in spite of superficial differences, the style of our own day.”

Having traced the development of the absolute participle in Modern English by means of its occurrence in the works of the most important writers, it is now in place to explain the cause of its frequency in this period. It has been seen that the absolute construction gradually increased in occurrence in certain works of the fifteenth century. Almost with the beginning of the sixteenth century the construction began to take on a new life, so to speak, and the reason of this is not hard to find. The increase in occurrence of the absolute participle and its general adoption are really due to that movement which so powerfully affected English at the beginning of the sixteenth century, viz., the Revival of Learning.

In considering as a whole the development of the absolute participle in Middle and Modern English, we notice three distinct and important influences on this construction :

(1) The influence of Old French that came in fully during the second half of the fourteenth century and that enriched the language with many prepositions and quasi-prepositions.

(2) Classical influence that came in about the beginning of the sixteenth century and that increased largely the occurrence of the construction.

(3) The influence of the Restoration in finally fixing and naturalizing the construction, in narrowing its domain principally to narration and description, and in giving it to poetry.

TABLE OF MODERN ENGLISH ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLES.

WORK.	PARTICIPLES.
Addison .....	46
Arnold : <i>Essays</i> .....	14
<i>Poems</i> .....	46
Bacon .....	18
Berners .....	10
Birrell.....	32
Blackmore .....	172

WORK.	PARTICIPLES.
Browne .....	35
Browning, Mrs.....	105
Bunyan.....	49
Burke.....	14
Cooper .....	80
Daniel.....	6
De Quincey.....	24
Dickens : <i>David Copperfield</i> .....	103
<i>Pickwick Papers</i> .....	238
Dryden : <i>Essay</i> .....	46
<i>Poems</i> .....	40
George Eliot.....	91
Fielding.....	173
Forster.....	72
Franklin.....	183
Froude.....	105
Goldsmith : <i>Vicar</i> .....	47
<i>Poems</i> .....	15
Gosson .....	14
Gray .....	46
Greene .....	0
Hawthorne.....	43
Holmes.....	67
Hooker.....	107
Hughes.....	148
Irving : <i>Goldsmith</i> .....	34
<i>Knickerbocker</i> .....	131
<i>Granada</i> .....	99
Jefferson .....	115
Johnson .....	3
Jonson .....	7
Latimer .....	13
Lewes .....	98
Lodge .....	58
Lowell .....	65
Lly.....	60
Macaulay.....	10
Marlowe .....	23
Marprelate.....	27

WORK.	PARTICLES.
Milton: <i>Essays</i> .....	74
<i>Poems</i> .....	105
Mitchell.....	27
More .....	58
Murfree .....	124
Nashe.....	11
Palgrave .....	20
Parkman .....	63
Pepys.....	188
Pope.....	33
Rives .....	77
Ruskin.....	140
Scott: <i>Ivanhoe</i> .....	88
<i>Marmion</i> .....	32
Shakespeare.....	52
Sidney .....	23
Spenser .....	18
Stevenson: <i>Dr. Jekyll</i> .....	17
<i>Prince Otto</i> .....	42
Swift.....	57
Thackeray: <i>Henry Esmond</i> .....	216
<i>Vanity Fair</i> .....	187
Walpole.....	26
Walton .....	108
Whipple .....	26
Total.....	4744

#### IV. THE CASE OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH.

The case of the absolute participle differs with the language. The Sanskrit uses the locative, the Greek the genitive, and the Latin the ablative, while the Teutonic languages use the dative. In Anglo-Saxon "the normal absolute case is the dative." In French the case is the accusative, and in Italian there is an interchange between the nominative and the accusative. What,

then, is the case of the absolute participle in Middle and Modern English? Obviously, according to history and analogy, it should be oblique in form and signification. But in later Middle English and in Modern English the form at least is nominative. The question, therefore, arises, Has there been a change of signification as well as a change of form? Before attempting to answer this, let us try to find out when this change of form took place.

In entering upon such an investigation as this we are confronted with two difficulties. In the first place, it is impossible to arrive at absolute certainty in regard to the question in point until the whole of Middle English literature has been sifted for examples; but in the nature of things, this could not be done in the limits of time assigned to this work. Again, the only place where we can clearly distinguish the case of the absolute participle in Middle English is when the participle is used with a pronoun as subject, and in this period very few such examples occur. With these two facts clearly in mind, it will be easily seen how hard it is to assign an exact or even a closely approximate date to the change of case of the absolute construction.

As far as I can learn, Morris and Oliphant are the only writers that have attempted to assign a date to this change of form. The former<sup>1</sup> says (p. 103): "In the oldest English the *dative* was the absolute case, just as the *ablative* is in Latin. About the middle of the fourteenth century the *nominative* began to replace it." In speaking of the *Cursor Mundi* (A. D. 1290), Oliphant<sup>2</sup> says (p. 408): "The Participle Absolute had hitherto always been in the dative, and this lasted down to 1400;" but notice the following example:

"Mi felaw smord hir barn in bedd,  
And sijen sco laid it priueli,  
And *i slepan* *in bedd*, me bi."

*Cursor Mundi*, ed. by Morris. EETS.,  
London, 1874. Pt. II., p. 500 (l. 8672).

<sup>1</sup> Morris, R.: *Historical Outlines of Eng. Accidence*. London, 1886.

<sup>2</sup> Oliphant, T. L. K.: *The Old and Middle English*. London, 1878.

So have the Cotton and Fairfax MSS.; but the Göttingen and Trinity MSS. have "while I slepte." And in his *New English* (I, 42) Oliphant, speaking of an alliterative poem on Alexander (about 1340), says: "There is a new idiom in p. 190; they ask Philip to be lord of their land, *þei to holden of hym*. Here a participle, such as *being bound*, is dropped after *þei*; and the nominative replaces the old Dative Absolute." This example must be looked on as a case of the nominative with the infinitive, like examples to which can be found in Chaucer (as, for instance, IV, 127).

From the first two of these statements I draw these results: Morris says that the nominative began to replace the dative about the middle of the fourteenth century; but it is seen from the example cited from the *Cursor Mundi* that this date is entirely too late. Again, Oliphant says that the dative case of the absolute participle lasted down to 1400; but it will be seen from the examples which follow that the dative case continued in use until at least the second quarter of the fifteenth century.

We cannot say with certainty when this change of form began to take place; but we can decide on a loosely approximate date when this change was finally and thoroughly effected. And in order to do this, let us direct our attention to the few clear examples of the dative and the nominative absolute that occur in the Middle English texts read.

The first example of a nominative absolute that I have been able to find in Middle English, is that cited above from the *Cursor Mundi*. The next examples found occur in Chaucer. Here we find three examples of the nominative absolute:

"What couthe a stourdy housebonde more devyse  
To prove hir wyfhode, . . . . .  
And *he contynuyng ever in stourdynesse.*"

II, 300.

Sim.<sup>1</sup> II, 311.

<sup>1</sup> Example similar to the one just preceding.

*"Sche, this in blake, likynge to Troilus,  
Over alle thinge he stode for to beholde."*

iv, 120.

This absolute construction is simply a translation of one in Italian, in which "questa" may be taken as a nominative.

That the absolute case had not changed permanently from dative to nominative before the close of the fourteenth century is shown by its use in Langland. In the B-text (A. D. 1377) occurs one example of the dative absolute :

*"As in aparaille and in porte proude amonges the peple,  
Otherwyse than he hath with herte or sygte shewyng ;  
Hym willynge that alle men wende."*

i, 402 (B. Passus XIII, 280).

The corresponding passage in the C-text (A. D. 1393) (Passus VII, 32) has "*me wilnyng*." Gower, however, shows one example of the nom. absol. :

*"And she constreigned of Tarquine  
To thing, which was ayein her will,  
She wolde nought her selven still."*

ii, 363.

I think "*constreigned*" is to be taken as an appositive participle, and that "she" at the beginning of the third line is really superfluous, being added merely for the sake of the metre.

The numerous examples of the dative absolute in Wyclif's translation of the Bible do not come into consideration here. They were simply, as has been said above, bald translations of the ablatives absolute in the *Vulgata*, and were in most cases otherwise rendered by the revisers of Wyclif. One example of a nominative absolute, however, has been noted in Wyclif's translation : in *Exodus* i, 10, we find, "*We overcumen, he go out.*" This isolated example is an additional proof of the fact that the absolute case had changed, or had begun to change, its form before Wyclif made his translation.

In *Palladius on Husbondrie*<sup>1</sup> (about A. D. 1420) occurs an example of the nominative absolute:

“ Feed stalons fatte goth nowe to gentil marys,  
And, *thay replete*, ayein thai goothe to stable ; ”

Bk. iv. 780.

But this may be due to the clause being appositive rather than absolute.

In three clear examples Hoccleve shows both forms. His poem of *Jerusalem's Wife* (about A. D. 1421 or '22) contains two examples of the nominative absolute:

“ And in hir bed, as shee lay on a nyght,  
This yonge maide and *shee sleepyng faste*,  
I kilde the chyld.”

171.

Sim. 165.

But in *How to learn to die* (the date of which is not known) is found this :

“ What multitude in yeeres fewe ago,  
*Thee yit lyuynge*, han leid been in hir grave ! ”

211.

The next instance of a clearly defined absolute case occurs in the *Paston Letters* under the year 1432. Here we have two datives absolute in the same clause: *Paston* i, 32—“That he take in noon of the iiiij. knightes ne squyers for the body, without th' advis of my Lord of Bedford, *him being in England* and *him being out*.” But in the same collection of letters, we find twenty years later (A. D. 1452) the nominative absolute. Under date of April 23, 1452, John Paston writes to (the Sheriff of Norfolk ?), and in his letter he says (l. c. i, 232): “He and v. of his felachip set upon me and . . . my servants, . . . . . *he smyting at me.*” That this is not an isolated example is shown by the fact that

<sup>1</sup> Ed. by B. Lodge. EETS, London, 1873 and 1879.

under the very same date “Some Gentlemen of Norfolk to (the Sheriff?)” say among other things (l. c. i, 231) : “His Highnesse shuld come in to Norwych or Claxton, *we not being in certeyn yet whedyr he shall remeve.*” From this date on, the nominative is the case of the absolute participle in the *Paston Letters*. Under the year 1454 there are two examples, and before 1461 three others, of the nominative absolute.

In *Landry*<sup>1</sup> 174 occurs an example of the nominative absolute. But this does not belong to that part of the work made by the unknown translator about 1440 ; it really belongs to Caxton’s translation of 1483–4, parts of which were inserted where there was a break in the earlier translation. The occurrence also of the dative absolute in Pecock’s *Repressor* (A. D. 1449)—“What euer is doon in an othir mannis name . . . (him it witing and not weerning) is doon of him” (II, 325)—is most likely due to the same cause as are Wyclif’s datives absolute—direct imitation of the Latin idiom.

Malory (1469) shows eight examples of the nominative absolute, but not a single example of the dative absolute. *Paris and Vienna* (1485) contains four examples of the nominative absolute and not one of the dative absolute, thus showing that, as regards the form, the change has been thoroughly made from dative to nominative.

From the above facts I conclude that the change in form of the absolute case from dative to nominative began before the close of the thirteenth century, and was most likely thoroughly effected during the second quarter of the fifteenth century.

The next question that arises is, What was the cause of this change of form in the absolute case? Various explanations have been offered in the solution of this problem. Probably it will be well to cite a few of these. Guest<sup>1</sup> says of the cause of the change : “The use indeed of the nominative, . . . does not admit of easy explanation. It is unknown to the older and

<sup>1</sup> Cited by Latham, R. G.: *A Hand-book of the English Language*. 6th ed. London, 1864 (p. 417).

purer dialects of our language, and probably originated in the use of the indeclinable pronoun." Maetzner<sup>1</sup> (p. 73) says : "Auffallend ist auch der Gebrauch eines Nominativs statt des hier zu erwartenden obliquen Kasus, welcher sich indessen aus einer Vermischung der im Allgemeinen gleichförmig gewordenen Kasus erklären mag. Für den häufiger gewordenen Gebrauch und die Form desselben dürfte auch die Einwirkung des Französischen nicht ausser Acht zu lassen sein." Bain<sup>2</sup> (p. 155) has the following note : "In all probability, the nominative was fixed upon from some random instances, without any deliberate consideration." Swinton<sup>3</sup> (p. 194) says on the change : "The loss of case-inflections has led to the confounding of the cases, and modern usage requires the nominative case in this construction." Abbott<sup>4</sup> (p. 275) says in the same strain : "In Anglo-Saxon a dative absolute was a common idiom. Hence, even when inflections were discarded, the idiom was retained ; and, indeed, in the case of pronouns, the nominative, as being the normal state of the pronoun, was preferred to its other inflections." Einenkel (l. c. p. 70) attributes the change of form to the influence of the Italian :

"Ohne Zweifel sind alle Belege, die in diese specielle Klasse gehören, als absolute Nominative anzusehen. Sie alle haben das Gemeinsame, dass die absoluten Constructionen Bestimmungen zum Inhalte des Hauptsatzes als einem Ganzen enthalten, dass das Prädicat des absoluten Casus ein Participium Praesentis ist und, was ihre Entstehung anbelangt, nicht dem Afranz., dass diese Art der Formel kaum kennt sondern dem Italienischen nachgebildet ist." . . . . .

"Wenn wir auch einigen Grund haben anzunehmen, dass abgesehen von den stehenden Participialformeln mit *veant* und *oyant*, im Afranz. zum mindesten im Curialstil jene uns fehlenden mit Participien Praesentis gebildeten absoluten Con-

<sup>1</sup> Maetzner, E.: *Englischa Grammatik*. Berlin, 1865. Zw. Theil, zw. Hälfte.

<sup>2</sup> Bain, A.: *A Higher English Grammar*. London, 1876.

<sup>3</sup> Swinton, W.: *A Grammar of the Eng. Lang.* New York, 1889.

<sup>4</sup> Abbott, E. A.: *A Shakespearian Grammar*. London, 1888.

structionen nicht erst mit *Commynes*, sondern schon viel eher in Gebrauch kamen, als uns die diesen Gegenstand behandelnden Arbeiten zugestehen mögen, so können wir doch vor der Hand zugeben, dass den betreffenden ME Constructionen nur italienische Vorbilder vorgelegen haben (die Lateinischen kommen des Ablativs wegen gar nicht in Frage). Denn es bedarf doch keiner langwierigen Beweisfürung, dass in einer so regel- und ruhelos gärenden Sprache, wie die ME es im 14. Jahrhundert war, eine Formelarten auf längere Zeit hinaus sich nicht lediglich dadurch getrennt und selbständige erhalten konnte, dass sie einer anderen fremden Sprache nachgebildet war bekannt sein konnte, der jene Formelart zuerst anwandte, zuerst nachbildete, und der sicher selbst Diesem unbekannt geblieben ist, da man in einer Zeit, wo die Philologie im heutigen Sinne des Wortes noch nicht vorhanden war, sich über die Herkunft einer Ausdrucksweise nicht die geringsten Gedanken machte und selbst bei Nachbildung ganz unbewusst verfur."

The remarks made above on the influence of Italian on the Middle English absolute construction disprove this extreme view of Einenkel.

To the above statements may be added the recent one of Kellner<sup>1</sup> (p. 125) : "The inflexion having decayed, the dative was mistaken for the nominative."

In his article on "The Objective Absolute in English" Dr. Bright<sup>2</sup> has struck the key-note as to the change of form from dative to nominative : "Let us look at the history of the absolute construction in English. We begin with the dative absolute in Anglo-Saxon (in origin a translation of the Latin ablative absolute); as inflections break down we come upon the transition or 'crude' type, in which the pronoun remains dative in form while the participle has lost all signs of inflection. But all nouns, as well as the participle, came to lose the inflectional signs of the dative case; we then obtained the

<sup>1</sup> Kellner, L.: *Historical Outlines of English Syntax*. London, 1892.

<sup>2</sup> Bright, J. W., in *Modern Lang. Notes*, March, 1890, col. 159-162.

- ‘crude’ type, in which both noun and participle, though absolute, were without any trace of inflection. The final act in this history was the admission of the nominative forms of the personal pronouns into this crude absolute construction—a dative absolute in disguise.”

The whole matter may be summed up as follows: During the first centuries that followed the Norman Conquest the English language was largely in the hands of the common people, Latin and French being the languages of the church, of the court, and of the higher classes. The result of the language being largely in the hands of ignorant people was confusion and heterogeneousness. Changes of necessity took place rapidly, and old syntactical constructions were ignored. The absolute participle was almost forgotten, and the remarkable infrequency of the pronouns as subjects of the participle accelerated the confusion. In the nouns the nominative and dative cases were mingled, and this was also the case with the pronouns. Numerous examples occur in Middle English where the nominative was used for the accusative and *vice versa*; and so it undoubtedly was with the absolute participial construction. Such a state of things finds a parallel in the language of the uneducated of the present day. In the speech of one of the ignorant characters in Richard Malcolm Johnston’s *Widow Guthrie* (p. 225), we have both the objective and nominative forms of the absolute construction: “They seldom and not always goes together, . . . but a most always sip’rate, *them with the moest childern havin’ the fewest niggers, and them with a houseful o’ childern sometimes havin’ nare nigger.* . . . Sallann mout of done it, *they crowdin’ in on her so rapid.*”

A third question now presents itself in regard to the absolute case: Is the absolute case in later Middle English and Modern English a real nominative? Most grammarians have in the main agreed that it is, by speaking of it as the nominative absolute without going more deeply into its meaning. A few, however, have held that it is not a true nominative. Let

us notice the testimony of the most prominent grammarians on both sides.

Murray<sup>1</sup> (p. 201) speaks thus positively of the case: "As in the use of the case absolute, the case is, in English, always nominative, the following example is erroneous in making it the objective. ' . . . he made as wise . . . proverbs, as any body has done since; *him* only excepted, who was a much greater man. . .' It should be, '*he* only excepted.'" Fowler<sup>2</sup> (p. 517) gives the following rule: "A Noun with a Participle, used Independently of the Grammatical construction into which it logically enters, is in the nominative case. . . . This is called the nominative absolute." Cobbett,<sup>3</sup> with his customary independence of speech, makes this statement (p. 118): "It appears to me impossible that a Noun or a Pronoun can exist in a grammatical state without having reference to some verb or preposition, either expressed or understood." In the same way he says (l. c. p. 110) as to the absolute construction: "For want of a little thought, . . . some grammarians have found out 'an absolute case,' as they call it; and Mr. Lindley Murray gives an instance of it in these words: 'Shame *being* lost, all virtue is lost.' The full meaning of the sentence is this: '*It being, or the state of things being such,* that shame *is* lost, all virtue is lost.'" In endeavoring to do away with the absolute construction, Cobbett simply forms two others. Brown<sup>4</sup> (p. 536) has this rule: "A Noun or a Pronoun is put absolute in the nominative, when its case depends on no other word."

As far as I can find out, R. G. Latham was the first to hold that the so-called nominative absolute is not a real nominative. In regard to the case he says (l. c. p. 416):

"Of the two phrases, *him excepted* and *he excepted*, the former is the one which is *historically* correct. It is also

<sup>1</sup> Murray, L.: *An English Grammar.* Vol. I. York, 1808.

<sup>2</sup> Fowler, W. C.: *Eng. Grammar.* New York, 1860.

<sup>3</sup> Cobbett, Wm.: *A Gram. of the Eng. Lang.* Revised and annotated by Alfred Ayres. New York, 1884.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, Goold: *The Gram. of Eng. Grammars.* 6th ed. New York, 1861.

the one which is *logically* correct. Almost all absolute expressions of this kind have a reference, more or less direct, to the *cause* of the action denoted. . . . . In the sentence, *he made the best proverbs of any one, him only excepted*, the idea of cause is less plain. Still it exists. The existence of *him* (*i. e.* the particular person mentioned as pre-eminent in proverb-making) is the cause or reason why he (*i. e.* the person spoken of as the second-best proverb-maker) was not the *very best* of proverb-makers. Now the practice of language in general teaches us this, viz. that where there is no proper Instrumental case, expressive of cause or agency, the Ablative is the case that generally supplies its place; and where there is no Ablative, the Dative. Hence the Latins had their Ablative, the Anglo-Saxons their Dative, Absolute. . . . In spite, however, both of history and logic, the so-called best authorities are in favour of the use of the Nominative case in the absolute construction."

Dr. Guest<sup>1</sup> remarks, on the "*him destroyed*" of Milton: "Instead of this dative absolute, modern English writers generally give us the pronoun in the nominative. Bentley, in his edition of the *Paradise Lost*, corrects this syntax whenever he meets with it: for *I extinct*, 9. 629; *thou looking on*, 9. 312, etc.; he reads *me extinct, thee looking on*, etc. His criticism was no doubt suggested by the laws of Latin grammar, but he would not have ventured upon it, had it not been borne out by contemporary English usage." This last sentence is disproved by the fact that the form prevalent at the time was the nominative absolute. When Milton, Tillotson, and possibly a few others use the dative absolute, it is in direct imitation of the Latin idiom.

Adams<sup>2</sup> follows Latham in his rejection of the current view as to the case of the absolute participle. He thus defines the construction (p. 197): "A noun or a pronoun and a participle are frequently found in the dative case to mark the time when

<sup>1</sup>Cited by Latham (l. c. p. 417).

<sup>2</sup>Adams, E.: *The Elements of the Eng. Language*. 13th ed. London, 1874.

an action is performed.” Several examples, such as “this said” and “him destroyed” from Milton and “her attendants absent” from Shakespeare, are next cited, and Adams continues (l. c. p. 178): “These words have no grammatical connexion with the rest of the sentence; i. e. are not governed by any word or words in the sentence to which they are attached, and are therefore called *Datives Absolute*, or *Detached Datives*. . . . The “A. S. dative was the origin of the *absolute* construction in English. Most grammarians, since the case endings are lost, prefer to call these words *nominatives*. But the loss of a suffix cannot convert one case into another. The *meaning* conveyed by these absolute words cannot be expressed by a true *nominative*.” And Adams says further in the same strain (l. c. p. 179): “In A. S. these absolute words are always in the dative case, but in later English, having lost their case-endings, they are often incorrectly regarded as nominatives.”

This view is held also by Schneider,<sup>1</sup> whose work appeared shortly after Adams’s. In speaking of the dative case he says (l. c. p. 243, § 4. c): “In einem Satze wie ‘this done, he retired,’ . . . ist der erstere Satz vom andern unabhängig und losgetrennt. Im Angels. war es ein wirklicher Dativ (dem lat. ‘Ablativus absolutus’ gleichkommend): weshalb man auch jetzt noch einen solchen Satz mit Recht ‘Dative Absolute’ nennt; Engländer sollten diess nie ausser Augen verlieren. Deshalb ist unrichtig zu sagen:

‘But, he away, ’tis nobler.’—Shakespeare.

Der Nominativ ‘he’ ist falsch.”

Maetzner gives (l. c. p. 72 g) simply the current view: “Der Kasus, in welchem gegenwärtig das Particp mit seinem Subjekte auftritt, ist der Nominativ, wie sich dies klar ergiebt, wo das Subjekt ein Fürwort ist, dessen Nominativ sich vom obliquen Kasus unterscheiden lässt.” Koch<sup>2</sup> simply says (p. 120), after giving examples of the dat. absol. from Wyclif: “Dane-

<sup>1</sup> Schneider, G.: *Gesch. der eng. Sprache*. Freiburg, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> Koch, C. F.: *Hist. Gram. der eng. Sprache*. 2 Aufl. Bd. I. Cassel, 1878.

ben tritt der Nominativ ;” and further (l. c. p. 122) : “Dieser Nominativ wird nun weiter verwandt.” Bain (l. c. p. 155) also says : “The absolute case, or the case of a detached participial clause, differs in different languages, but grammarians have for the most part agreed that in English it is the nominative. . . . . . . . . . . . . Hence, it is common to regard as wrong the expression of Tillotson,—‘ *him* only excepted.’” Bain thinks that Adams’s points against the current view are well taken. Abbott adds (l. c. p. 275) to what he says above : “The nominative absolute is much less common with us than in Elizabethan authors ;” a remark that is based on very imperfect observation, for statistics show that the nominative absolute is just as plentiful now as it was in Shakespeare’s time.

In drawing a conclusion from his sketch of the evolution of the absolute case as given above, Dr. Bright (l. c. col. 161) thus expresses himself : “It is clear that these pronouns (and the relative infrequency of their use in absolute clauses is significant) could not change the character of the construction. The conclusion is therefore arrived at that the absolute construction in English, despite the use of the nominative forms of the personal pronouns (the same is true of Italian), is historically the objective absolute.”

Latham, Adams, Schneider, and Bright have expressed the right view of the real case of the absolute participle in English. We have seen how the nominative took the place of the dative, and while it is not held for a moment that we should go back to the older and more correct form, yet it is right to parse the so-called nominative absolute as “a dative absolute in disguise.” As Latham has shown, this is correct, both logically and historically. It has also been observed by Dr. Bright (l. c. col. 160-1) that “the absolute clause expresses an oblique relation—a relation that is chiefly temporal in significance, and the use of oblique cases for this construction in Greek and Latin is an indication of the true nature of the construction in all related languages.”

In his *Latin Grammar* (§ 409) Prof. Gildersleeve says that “the Ablative Absolute may be translated by the English Objective Absolute, which is a close equivalent ;” and his use here of the expression “Objective Absolute” is due to the fact that “he had in mind . . . that English in its period of full inflections had a dative absolute, and in naming its historic survival he aimed at consistency with the terminology of modern English grammar, in which all datives are classed as objectives.”

#### V. THE STYLISTIC EFFECT OF THE ABSOLUTE PARTICIPLE IN MIDDLE AND MODERN ENGLISH.

At the close of his dissertation (pp. 46–51) Callaway gives a short chapter on “The Anglo-Saxon Absolute Participle as a Norm of Style,” in which he acknowledges his indebtedness to the article of Prof. Gildersleeve<sup>1</sup> on “The Stylistic Effect of the Greek Participle.” The theory of the stylistic effect of the Greek participle is then given, and the writer asks: “Is the theory likewise applicable to the participle in Anglo-Saxon?” It is difficult to answer this question, because both the absolute and appositive participles are comparatively infrequent in Anglo-Saxon, while both are frequent in Latin and Greek. Yet this may be said (l. c. p. 52): “The stylistic effect of the absolute participle in Anglo-Saxon was much the same as in the classical languages: it gave movement to the sentence; it made possible flexibility and compactness. But, owing to the artificial position of the absolute construction in Anglo-Saxon, its stylistic value was reduced to a minimum, was indeed scarcely felt at all. The absolute participle rejected as an instrument of style, the Anglo-Saxon had no adequate substitute therefor. The two commonest substitutes, the dependent sentence and the co-ordinate clause, as used in Anglo-Saxon, became unwieldy and monotonous. Brevity and compactness

<sup>1</sup> Gildersleeve, B. L., in *The Amer. Jour. of Phil.*, IX (1888), pp. 137–157.

were impossible ; the sentence was slow in movement and somewhat cumbersome. The language stood in sore need of a more flexible instrument for the notation of subordinate conceptions, of such an instrument as the absolute dative seemed capable of becoming but never became." Callaway had also said just before (l. c. p. 50) : "The Anglo-Saxon to the last remained practically upon the plane held to-day by New High German. The help needed came only with the gradual development of the appositive participle ; the introduction of the nominative absolute into Middle English, possibly from the French (*sic*) (Einenkel, l. c. p. 74 f.) ; and the rise of the Modern English gerund ; when, it seems to us, English was put upon an equal footing with the philometochic Greek."

If this was the condition of things in Anglo-Saxon, what was it in Middle English and what is it in Modern English? First, let us notice briefly the Middle English domain. Here the same condition of things existed as in Anglo-Saxon. We have seen that up to the last half of the fourteenth century the absolute participle was practically non-existent, whether in prose or poetry. Its prevalence in Chaucer is due largely to Italian influence, in part also to French influence ; and the occurrence of the participle in the works of Chaucer's contemporaries and of the fifteenth century writers is to be traced to the same French influence. But the construction was avoided as much as possible, and in its stead the various shifts that were resorted to in Anglo-Saxon were used. The absolute participle here cannot be spoken of as "a norm of style," for it was in reality an excrescence, and not an inherent quality of the style. Where it existed it gave freedom and movement, but as a construction it was scarcely felt at all. During the fifteenth century, however, just before the awakening caused by the Revival of Learning, the absolute participle became, as we have seen, somewhat prevalent and was more felt in the style. But the great infrequency of the construction in Malory's *Mort D'Arthur*, a work written under the domination of French literature and a work in which above all others in the same century we should

naturally expect the construction, shows that the absolute participle was still foreign to the genius of the language.

Secondly, we treat the Modern English period. Here we find the absolute participle assimilated, developed as a principle of style, and used by nearly all writers. English, in taking up and assimilating into itself the riches of the classical languages, did not neglect this very common idiom. What the poverty of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English failed to do, was done by Modern English. At first, the homeliest writers used the construction but rarely, but the more classical authors, like Hooker and Milton, crowded their sentences with it, and to their writings Prof. Gildersleeve's criticism (l. c. p. 148) can well apply : "The undue multiplication of participles does give an intoxication to style. The finite verb has to be reached through a crowd of circumstances, the logical relations are not clearly expressed, and the play of color in which temporal, causal, conditional, adversative rays mix and cross is maddening." Bacon and Ben Jonson are at the other extreme, and we see from these four writers that the construction has not become thoroughly naturalized. This was effected during the last half of the seventeenth century, and during the eighteenth the form was more thoroughly fixed as an inherent element of the style. It was in this condition when the novel became a distinct branch of literature, and with the novelist the construction has always been exceedingly popular. The fact that some writers use it but rarely, is rather to be explained by something peculiar to those writers than by the refusal of the language of their time to use it. Macaulay uses it rarely ; but, on the other hand, Froude, whose style is strikingly like Macaulay's, uses it with great freedom.

In studying the absolute participle as a norm of style, it is well to notice that it belongs to certain kinds of literature. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it belonged largely to didactic and philosophical prose, but now its province is distinctively narration and description. In this respect it is like the Greek ; for Prof. Gildersleeve has said (l. c. p. 147) of

that: "As the argumentative part of an author is the home of the articular infinitive, so the narrative is the proper sphere of the participle." And also Dr. Spieker,<sup>1</sup> in his article on "The Genitive Absolute in the Attic Orators" (p. 320), says on the same point: "Time is . . . throughout, and naturally so, the reigning relation expressed. This being so, we might expect it (*i. e.* the gen. abs.) more largely in narrations, and we should not be deceived, for where there is much narration there are ordinarily, relatively speaking, a large number of genitives abs." Hence, as the absolute participle occurs in English most largely in narrative and descriptive prose, we shall find it occurring most frequently in prose fiction. Next to this stand biography, history, and the essay. As in Greek, so in English, the percentage of the occurrence of the absolute participle is greater in narrations than in descriptions. In didactic prose the English of the past two centuries is not much given to the use of the construction, and Dr. Spieker shows (l. c. p. 320) that this was the case in Greek: "In didactic prose, where, to be sure, there is to some extent less occasion for it, the percentage is far less, in some few cases indeed none at all; in such works its use is avoided where it would be possible to have it."

In Anglo-Saxon and Middle English the absolute participle belongs almost entirely to prose. Only two examples of the dative absolute occur in Anglo-Saxon poetry, and in Middle English poetry the construction is very rare. Chaucer, in his somewhat exceptional use of it, simply imitates Boccaccio, in whose poems it is found in large numbers. Gower and Langland use it very occasionally. But in Modern English poetry the case is different. In Shakespeare and the Elizabethan poets and dramatists, the absolute construction is not common, but in Dryden's poetry and that of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it often occurs. What is the explanation of this frequency? Probably it is to be found in Earle's remark

<sup>1</sup> Spieker, E. H., in *The Amer. Journal of Phil.*, vi (1885), pp. 310-343.

(l. c. p. 461): “The Eighteenth century is emphatically *the century of English Prose*. . . . So much is prose in possession of the time, that it invades the poetry and governs it. . . . Poetry was simply annexed by Prose.” In the disinclination to use the construction in poetry the earlier periods of English are like Greek. The genitive absolute is not common in Homer, and in the early elegiac poets there are but few examples found—“a fact due in part to the absence of occasion for the use of the construction, but not altogether. Indeed, there is plenty of room left for its use had it been familiar. . . . Here, as elsewhere, the norm for poetry once set was adhered to, and though the later prose use influenced the poetry of that period to some extent, we can say that throughout its frequent occurrence was a mark of prose, while poetry preserved in general the limits set by Homer and the early poets, limits that to them were natural.” (Spieker.)

Some recent writers have inveighed against the use of the absolute participle. McElroy,<sup>1</sup> in speaking of the construction, says (p. 105, n. 7): “Even such forms as *Herod being dead, the angel warned Joseph* seem rare (*sic*) in the best recent English.” Genung<sup>2</sup> (p. 115) thus speaks of the participle in composition: “The participial construction is a convenient means of condensation; it also promotes flexibility of style by obviating the too constant recurrence of principal verbs. Being, however, a subordinated construction, it needs careful adjustment to the principal assertion on which it depends.” And again (l. c. p. 158): “The participial construction is a valuable means of cutting down a clause. . . . . The use of a participle with subject not a part of the principal sentence—a construction parallel to the Ablative Absolute in Latin—is foreign to the genius of English, and requires caution and moderation.”

<sup>1</sup> McElroy, J. G. R.: *The Structure of English Prose*. New York, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Genung, J. F.: *The Practical Elements of Rhetoric*. Boston, 1890.

In contrast with these pessimistic views of the absolute construction in Modern English style, may be cited the general remark of Diez<sup>1</sup> (p. 272) : "Vermittelst der Participleconstruction zieht man mehrfache mit dem Relativpronomen oder mit Conjunctionen für Zeit und Grund gebildete Sätze in einfache zusammen. Diese Methode wird in den jüngeren Sprachen fast in demselben Umfange geübt wie in der lateinischen, so dass die Vernachlässigung derselben den guten Stil verletzen würde." Dr. Spieker notes (l. c. p. 313) in the same line : "In his treatment of the participle, Classen<sup>2</sup> deplores the almost utter absence of the German participle, except as an attributive ; an absence which causes German translations to lose in force and beauty, and often makes conceptions inadequate or even utterly wrong. The English language has fared better in this respect, and every English-speaking person acquainted with the German language will agree with him."

As in the classical languages, so in Modern English, the absolute participle gives freedom and variety to the sentence, and it has become an inherent part of the syntax. It is not only used in literature proper, but it is occasionally heard in conversation. It occurs often in extemporaneous prayers and sermons ; though in these last provinces of the language its use is largely restricted to set formulae—"all things being equal," "all things considered," etc. Rhetoricians may decry its use, grammarians may remind us that it is an idiom foreign to English, and critics may tell us that its occurrence in Modern English literature is very rare ; but, with all these assertions, a careful study of the construction by means of a close reading of all the prominent prose stylists of Modern English shows that the absolute participle is used by all writers, and that it has finally become a regular part of the style. It was needed to supply a want, and it has done this fully.

<sup>1</sup> Diez, F.: *Gram. der roman. Sprachen.* Bd. III. Bonn, 1876-7.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Beobachtungen über den Homerischen Sprachgebrauch.*

## VI. RESULTS.

The following is a short summary of the results believed to be reached in the preceding pages :

1. In the development of the absolute participle in Middle English, two periods must be distinguished. In the first, which extends from 1150 to 1350, the construction is practically non-existent, and where it does appear, it must be looked on as a survival of the Anglo-Saxon absolute participle, or as a direct imitation of the Latin ablative absolute. In the second, which extends from 1350 to 1500, French influence causes an increase in occurrence, but the construction is still a stranger. In only two monuments, Chaucer's poems and the *Paston Letters*, is it at all common, and this frequency is due to an excess of foreign influence—of Italian in Chaucer, of classical in the *Paston Letters*.
2. The presence of the absolute participle in Middle English is due almost entirely to Old French influence, though this influence was not great. In the first period of Middle English it was not appreciable, but in the second period it made itself felt by the increased occurrence of the construction and by the importation of prepositions that were formerly absolute participles. Through analogy to these English has been enriched by many new prepositions and quasi-prepositions derived from participles. Old French influence, however, was not able to hold the English absolute case to an oblique form like itself. The Italian absolute construction exercised an appreciable influence on Chaucer, but there is no evidence to show that it influenced any other Middle English writer.

3. As regards the development of the absolute participle in Modern English we must also distinguish two periods. In the first, which extends, roughly, from 1500 to 1660, the construction occurs but sparingly in writers whose style is simple and English, but is very abundant in writers specially dominated by classical influence. This increase in occurrence is due to the

Revival of Learning. In the second period, extending from 1660 to the present time, the construction becomes naturalized under the influence of the Restoration, and takes its place as an inherent part of the syntax. It is given to poetry, and its sphere is largely narrowed to that of narration and description.

4. The case of the absolute participle changed its form in Middle English from dative to nominative. This change began to take place before the close of the thirteenth century, and was finally effected during the second quarter of the fifteenth. The reason of this change of form is to be found in the heterogeneous condition of the language in late Anglo-Saxon and early Middle English, by which inflections were leveled and old syntactical distinctions were forgotten. The change was a gradual process, and is not due directly to any foreign influence. The so-called nominative absolute in Modern English is really "a dative absolute in disguise." Both by history and logic it is an oblique case, and cannot be expressed by a true nominative.

5. The stylistic effect of the absolute participle in Middle English is about the same as in Anglo-Saxon: where it occurred it gave freedom and movement to the sentence, but its artificial character almost kept it from being felt. In Modern English there is a different condition of things. Here it is an important adjunct to the style, to which it imparts variety and compactness. It gives life and movement to the sentence, and is the ready resource of all writers of narration and description for the purpose of expressing subordinate conceptions.

## LIFE.

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I was born at Tuskegee, Alabama, October 14, 1867. In September, 1881, I entered the State Agricultural and Mechanical College, Auburn, Alabama, from which I was graduated in 1886 with the degree of B. S., and in 1888 with that of C. E. During 1886-87 I taught in Marvin College, Clinton, Kentucky, and during 1887-88 was an instructor in the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Alabama.

In October, 1888, I entered the Johns Hopkins University as a graduate student, and selected English as my principal subject and German and French as my subsidiary subjects. I was appointed University Scholar in English in January, 1889, and during 1889-90 was Fellow in English. During 1890-91 I was Professor of English in the Southwestern University, Georgetown, Texas. I again entered the Johns Hopkins University in October, 1891, as a Fellow by Courtesy.

While at the University I have pursued courses under Drs. Bright and Browne, Drs. Wood and Learned, Prof. Elliott and Drs. Todd, F. M. Warren, and John E. Matzke, and Prof. Bloomfield,—to all of whom I wish to return sincere thanks for many kindnesses.

CHARLES HUNTER ROSS.

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY,  
*April 15, 1892.*